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ABSTRACT

Many Native Americans are reluctant to work with researchers who have not demonstrated a sense of obligation to their community. Research that has proven to be valuable has trained American Indians to collect data, incorporated participatory research methods, and supplemented quantitative data collection with qualitative research. The tension between science and advocacy results from the different goals involved. A researcher must publish or perish, thereby forfeiting opportunities for advocacy. Those who choose advocacy end up filing and forgetting their manuscripts. Most funding for Native American research comes from the federal government, whose funding criteria must be met. Indians often fail to submit compelling proposals for competitive funding. They need assistance with needs assessment, research design, and evaluation. The federal government focuses on accountability, and tribes may tend to fall behind in their program evaluation. Evaluation needs to be done from an Indian perspective, so Indians need training in conducting evaluations. Sampling is a problem because few tribes collect data. If research is going to include Native American samples, then the design must include some additional costs. Tribes need to be involved in data interpretation to ensure its validity. Cultural competence needs to be reconsidered as a bicultural perspective that accurately reflects reality. To encourage Native Americans to respond positively to research proposals, they must be equal partners. All relevant federal agencies should be brought into these discussions on Indian research issues. (TD)

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ED 473 277

Focus on Implications for Policy and Practice

Velma Garcia Mason, Ph.D.

Good afternoon. I work for the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior as the director for the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention. When I heard about this symposium I felt very optimistic to think that there actually are researchers interested in looking at Indian research issues. We (Indians who work on policy in federal programs) have been trying to obtain more knowledge on this subject so we could develop better policies and set some new directions on how the federal government should be responding to various issues, particularly with regard to alcohol and substance abuse and, from our interest perspective, disabilities resulting from alcohol and substance abuse.

When I looked at the papers, I asked myself four questions. First, "What is the value of this paper from the perspective of policy development implications at the local tribal level?" I have to entertain this issue because our policy mandate is to involve the tribal government in critical policy-making decisions as much as possible, and the federal government in the Department of the Interior is committed to honor and work with tribes within the framework of meeting their self-determination goals.

Second, I asked, "What is the value of this paper for policy development purposes at the federal government level?" The Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention has a Congressional mandate, Public Law 99-570 (also called the Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment and Prevention Act of 1986), to address the alcohol and substance abuse prevention needs in Indian Country, to provide needed direction and guidance to federal agencies responsible for Indian programs that address alcohol and substance abuse, and to focus existing programs and resources upon this problem (26 USCA 2402). When we look at research findings, we look at them in terms of how they would benefit tribes.

My third question had to do with the issue of applied research. Since we have a mandate to serve Native American populations, I looked at the papers in terms of their applied research value—i.e., "How can the federal government use the research findings, methodologies, and tools? How can the findings be used to help the federal government respond to the problem of alcohol and substance abuse, and how can tribes benefit from the research data at the program level?"

The last question was, "To what extent can the research findings be applied or incorporated into a response plan to the training needs of Native American populations at the tribal level—i.e., how can this paper help in transmitting knowledge and new technology to tribes?" So that is the perspective I used in my review of the papers.

As I'm sitting here over the last two days, I have heard a lot of similar concerns and points discussed, so I'm not going to spend a lot of additional time on them.

I was impressed with all your papers. I had an opportunity to conduct some postdoctoral research on a small National Science Foundation grant to develop some cross-tribal testing instruments and their properties in a partnership agreement with Johns Hopkins University and UCLA. That experience convinced me of the need to look closer at field research issues and the need to start developing more research capabilities within tribes.

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Prior to that, I had also had similar experience working with field research issues on an epidemiological research project at Colorado State University, where we had received a grant to conduct a national study on Indian alcohol and substance use among close to 14,000 subjects. We were successful in obtaining a large sample of cross-tribal youth, from the Seminole in Florida, Apache Tribes in Arizona and New Mexico, Assiniboin Sioux at Fort Peck, Montana, Red Lake Chippewa, Navajo and Pueblo tribes in New Mexico. We were most successful because we worked with tribal councils to get their approvals and support for the project. We went into the school systems and worked with the superintendents and school principals to collect the data. From this research experience, I saw the needs that exist and I think you all touched on these issues in your papers.

Regarding Dr. Jamie Davis' paper, *A Brief History of and Future Considerations for Research in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*, I agree in principle that in order for the tribes to trust the applied value of data, they must trust the researchers and the research institutes, which in most cases, are universities. I'm not sure they do have this trust, and as we have all said, it has been the practice that many researchers come onto the reservation, thank the people after they complete the data collection, and leave the community with no further sense of obligation to the community. That is the impression that Indian communities have of researchers on reservations. So Jamie hit the nail on the head when she said that historically, because of that experience of exploitation of Indian people, a lot of Native Americans are reluctant to work with researchers, especially non-Indian researchers. Actually, they probably distrust Native American researchers who do that as well.

What's missing from the paper, in my opinion, is the value of some of the previous research by American Indian researchers; for example, Dr. Bea Medicine's work and that of Dr. Edward Dozier and Dr. Alfonso Ortiz were among the early pioneering work in Indian research. I am sure there are others, such as Mr. Leonard Pinto, who conducted some valuable early research on alcohol and substance abuse among his people (Pinto, 1973). There was also some valuable work done in the '50s and '60s in the field of Indian education that was based on sound methodology acceptable to Indian populations. I believe that work, in fact, made a difference in setting a new direction for Indian education policy. It laid the foundation for many of us who came behind and tried to conduct similar research. One example is the Kennedy Subcommittee study on Indian education (Special Subcommittee on Indian Education of the Committee of Labor and Public Welfare, 1969), which was an enormously expensive study led by University of Chicago. This study was most successful because it trained Indian parents and incorporated participatory research in the community studies strategy. The study also incorporated qualitative research methods to supplement the quantitative data collection. In my opinion, the most valuable data came from the interviews conducted by the Indian researchers; as a result, many Indian communities were able to identify with the results of that study. The data resulted in the creation of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. This is a good example of applied Indian research.

In my own previous experience in quantitative research on Indian alcohol and substance abuse, I had the opportunity to examine its relationship to certain cultural and linguistic variables. These were very specific factors that were actually included in the instrumentation I had developed at the request of tribes that were participants in the research project. This protocol required the researchers to take a few steps backward and do quite a bit of item analysis with tribes so that the instruments used in the research to collect data would be useful to the tribes after exiting the Indian community. That research, in my opinion, was useful because it focused on defining the emic (Native) culturally acquired perceptions and/or

definitions of the variables, for example in my research on Indian identity, and some of you discussed that topic in your papers.

Dr. Spero Manson pointed out the tension between science and advocacy. I was trying to think how I would apply that to my own experience, and I think that it was an issue for me in my own research experience and it is still an issue today. It's not necessarily the science that's an issue, or even advocacy. I think it's the conflicting goals of scientific research and the commitment to applicability: knowing that the knowledge collected would address some of the local needs of tribes on reservations and being unable to take that step for a variety of reasons. The goals of science and advocacy are unfortunately totally different. It is rare that the same person can do both well, and that to me is the dilemma.

What I would like to pose to you is this question: To what extent is genuine collaboration or integration possible with these conflicting roles and goals? In my past experiences at various universities, it was my observation that "if you don't publish, you perish." So the conflict that Dr. Joseph Stone addressed yesterday is a reality for Native American researchers. When you are perceived as a researcher, you have to make a decision as to whether you would prioritize pure research or work for the good of an Indian community but not for research purposes. If you choose to work for the good of an Indian community, you just file and forget your manuscripts. That's a real issue, and I'd like for you to consider that and discuss it together at a future time.

With regard to Dr. Walter Hillabrant's paper, *Research in Indian Country: Challenges and Changes*, I agree that the stakeholder often is the federal government. Funding for Native American research projects usually comes from the federal government, or less often, a Robert Wood Johnson foundation fellowship or someone else who's interested in providing funding. Most of the research, as you know, is budget driven, and if you don't meet the federal funding criteria you're not going to get funded to do that research project. Research is not often a priority for tribes. It's not a funding priority. So when they go to the federal government or when they go to the Hill asking for funding, you can bet it's not going to be for research, except to the extent that it meets their needs assessment value.

We all know that Indians often fail to submit compelling proposals in their applications for competitive funding. I know this to be so particularly in prevention, because we get calls from tribes that haven't qualified for a grant and are often disappointed with rejection letters from funding agencies. They express needing assistance with needs assessment or to obtain results and findings of research based on Indian population samples. I also think that the kinds of research designs submitted by most of the competitive applicants are not generated by tribes. I suspect that most of the research design is really done at the university level and then presented to the tribes for their reactions, so there's not a proactive involvement.

Dr. Hillabrant, you talked about the sampling problem and I, like Dr. Spero Manson, agree that it is definitely a problem. It is one of the reasons we cannot get valid and reliable data. Let me given you an example. Two years ago, at the Department of the Interior, we tried to collect child abuse and child neglect alcohol-related data. We had data from 1992 to 1996, analyzed it, and reported summaries to tribes. In some cases, we were able to compare tribal data with regional data and national data. But the tribes quit collecting data after 1996 because of the Indian Self-Determination Act. When that law was passed the tribes were no longer required to collect data, and that has left us with a serious sampling problem, since only a few tribes report data to us.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration conducts a national Household Survey (HHS/SAMHSA Household Survey) in which they have to oversample in order to determine a profile for the Native

American populations. I agree with Dr. Hillabrant that if research is going to include Native American samples, then the design has to include some additional costs or the costs have to be built into the design.

I think what is also missing is some attention to the fact that tribes need to be involved in data interpretation. I didn't see that in any of your papers. That's so very critical, because researchers are now looking at a lot of cultural variables. And if you're going to look at culture, you need to make sure that it is interpreted with some cultural validity. I would caution non-Indian researchers to really be careful in how they interpret the culture data. Sometimes it is not so obvious and not what it appears to be. Sometimes the population being studied will show you something just to please you. So you have to be very careful.

Dr. Hillabrant, in your paper, I felt that you did not sufficiently differentiate research and evaluation. We certainly want tribes to apply the knowledge gained from research. And most of us believe that tribes should have an evaluation and research agenda. There's a need to collect evaluation data, and I think many tribes would rather collect and do evaluation than focus on research or spend money on research. It seems to me that when tribes have a choice, they will look at evaluation. For the federal government, evaluation is probably very critical. Then I think you need to look at some of the variables that Native Americans pay attention to in program evaluation. The federal government pays attention to accountability, and that's where Indians tend to fall behind within their program evaluation. Indians have not been taught some simple ways to conduct evaluation. Basically, program evaluation in Indian communities is critical and it needs to be done from an Indian perspective.

As I said, tribes can probably relate more to evaluation than to research because they see a benefit from receiving it. I think most tribes look at evaluation as a tool to determine if their services delivery activities are, in fact, effective. I think they are now at the point where they are willing to look at that objectively. Sometimes they do rely on their research consultants who come in from outside the reservation and conduct program evaluations. What I would like to see you explore is how to help tribes develop that kind of capability. Research and evaluation can go hand in hand, but you need to make sure that the tribes see that distinction and that relationship. There is a lot of research needed in order to collect baseline data. Baseline data is often not there, and most programs cannot do effective evaluation because they do not have any data to compare their program results to. I would like to conclude with a statement that you made, Dr. Hillabrant, that tribes need to get behind the research field. I think that's where it's at.

Dr. Paulette Running Wolf's paper, *Cultural Competence Approaches to Evaluation in Tribal Communities*—I agree with your very first statement, Paulette, when you said our discussion here should not be limited to disability research and evaluation. The designs, procedures, and reports of this research have often been implemented without regard to the cultural systems or the cultural competence of the subjects. I think the monograph you are preparing through this symposium will have some valuable implications for policy at both the tribal and the federal government levels as well as the program level. I think the Department of the Interior will be able to use some of your findings and some of your research, for example, to develop stronger policies for alcohol and substance prevention and violence prevention.

You raised the point that much of the current research is based on western psychological theory that is contrary to the values, structures, and worldviews of tribes. I agree with you. The evaluation methodology that you discuss in your paper demonstrates what Indian researchers can do creatively. I wouldn't say that non-Indian researchers cannot do this kind of creative work, but I think it's easier for

Native Americans to do it because they have the cultural experience.

A particular strength in your paper is your reference to the development of culturally appropriate assessment instruments. I like that, and I'd like to see more of it. We at the OASAP [Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention] can put that information on our technical assistance web site and make it available to Indian tribes.

You point out the importance of identifying methods that would enhance the cultural relevance of research in tribal communities. You also raise the issue of what is means to be healthy. I see that as a challenge, and I'd like to see further development of that discussion.

Basically, I didn't see anything in your paper that I thought could be interpreted as negative. I believe the paper shows some far-reaching implications for policy. There is one caution that I noted—perhaps more of a suggestion. I would like to have some consideration or rethinking in relation to the concept of "cultural competence," to consider looking at it from a bicultural perspective, because I think biculturalism is the reality of most of the tribes. We don't live in a "traditional cultural world" any more. I think that when we talk about our cultures, most Indians talk as if there's one cultural context. So we talk about something that's abstractly Native American when, in fact, we don't really operate that way because we don't have autonomy. We are part of another system. We can't flourish and survive unless we work with the American culture. So American culture is, in fact, part of Indian culture. It's part of us. Indian people sometimes forget this. Researchers try to make rigid categories and forget this reality. There's also another dimension, and that is there are so many intermarriages that realistically you can't really talk about only one cultural context anymore. If you're a Navajo married to a Pueblo or a Sioux, you try to integrate those lifestyles in addition to American culture. So I would like to see some consideration of a bicultural framework for bicultural competence.

Dr. Catherine Marshall, I don't know enough about disability research to feel confident critiquing the paper, *Community-Based Research and American Indians with Disabilities: Learning Together Methods that Work*, but to the extent that it deals with Native American research I have some comments on it. You stated that we must begin to function with research design that's actually based on culture; coming from a cultural orientation myself, I felt that was a very strong statement. You talk about key collaborators, and I agree that you definitely need that. However, I also would throw in a caution about key collaboration. A Native American might interpret that as almost patronizing. It might look to some Native Americans as if you're using Native Americans for a gain, a research gain. Now, I'm saying this because as a researcher, I think you need to be aware of it. I am not saying that all Native Americans will look at it that way, but I would recommend that you maybe rethink that. I do want to say that in terms of disabilities research, I don't think there are enough Native Americans out there with that expertise, so you probably will not find many Native Americans to collaborate with at the professional level on that research topic.

You talk about culturally sensitive methods such as listening. I agree with you. I think that we all need to do a little bit more listening.

I like the statement you made about cultural disability among the Australian Aborigines. I think that can be extended to the Indian populations as well, and can cause social disadvantage. I like the strong statement that you made about equal partnerships. That is what will make Native American people encouraged, agree, and respond.

With Jennifer's paper, *Learning from and Working with Yup'ik Professionals*, I got really excited about the collaborative research on the project. I've always seen the Yup'ik tribe as exemplary. When I worked for the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Indian Education Programs sought out exemplary

programs and Yup'ik was one of their outstanding education programs. When I read your paper, I had a great sense of appreciation and some background on your subject. Your paper was very smooth. The methodology was detailed. A strong partnership with Yup'ik certainly stands out. I think the analysis that was done of the Yup'ik culture is also presented with a lot of respect, and I gained further respect for the Yup'ik culture as I read the paper. I just had two or three questions. I didn't know how much you involved the Yup'ik people in terms of goal setting. And I didn't see information on how you plan to involve the Yup'ik in interpretation of the findings.

Basically, the Yup'ik study has far-reaching implications for policies at the school level and the level of early Head Start programs. We need to have the Alaska Native populations work more closely with the state. They're having so many problems and I feel that's where we can try to help at the policy level. I also think some of the foundation you have laid for the research will certainly provide much guidance to the federal government.

I do have one more concern: I would have liked to have seen your research team include some kind of component that would help develop some internal capability within the Yup'ik on doing research and evaluation. I think that's very critical because it's still a very viable culture and a very active linguistic culture. They cannot continue relying on out-of-state researchers. At some point we would like to see them prepared with some research skills, as well.

In conclusion, I don't know if I did justice to the papers. I felt you all did such a wonderful job. As I think of the value and the energy that you put into your papers, I ask: What can we do with this work and its implications? I would like to see a second symposium, and I'm committed to talking to the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, who has a major trust responsibility with the American Indians, to see if he would be interested in initiating an interagency effort to see that this gets done.

I think we need to keep this momentum of intense discussions on Indian research issues alive. We need to bring other federal agencies such as SAMHSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration], OSERS [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services] and DOJ [Department of Justice] to the table. The DOJ, for example, has an interest in Indian research and its application to the tribal and federal levels. We have already had one meeting on this topic. We also need to involve the National Science Foundation. I understand they are bringing Indian educators together to talk about Indian research in May. So there are a lot of people interested, and there are a lot of programs looking for answers on issues brought forth in your papers and discussions at this forum.

What can I do from my position? I think we can probably start identifying our other federal partners to see if there might be an interest to bring these issues to their agenda. I am, for example, interested in examining some of the funding criteria for research funded by the federal government. I think even the Office of National Drug Control Policy at the White House would be interested to come to the table as well.

I think the work that you're started has some major implications. It has the potential to go beyond what has been done before. Nobody has really come to the table and started ironing out some of the pros and cons of Indian research with people who have disabilities. So I see this as a very positive step in the right direction. I would like to offer to help be part of the process to move this effort beyond today's session.

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